



Peter Welch (D-Vt.) and Bill Shuster (R-Penn) have introduced legislation that would eliminate many of the anti-competitive rules imposed on merchants by credit card companies. H.R. 2382, the Credit Card Interchange Fee Act of 2009 would allow merchants to discount for debit transactions, choose which kinds of credit cards to accept within a certain brand, and permit merchants to steer customers to certain payment methods through discounts and other incentives.

House to Consider Climate Change Bill

The House Energy and Commerce Committee

approved comprehensive legislation in late May that would significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the use of renewable energy. The American Clean Energy and Security Act (ACES) would implement a "cap and trade" system where companies could buy and sell emissions credits to meet federally mandated emissions caps.

The bill also includes a provision requiring states to develop plans for the development of an electric vehicle battery charging infrastructure. Locations specified in the legislation could include both truckstops and highway rest areas. NATSO has discussed these provisions with

counsel, and though the legislation references rest areas, it does not affect the federal ban prohibiting rest area commercial services.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) hope to pass the legislation through the House by the end of the summer.

Senators Developing Card Check Compromise

Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), co-author of the Employee Free Choice Act, is working on a compromise to the bill that would ensure its passage through the Senate. The original version

would allow unions to organize at a workplace by having a majority of employees sign a petition supporting unionization, foregoing a secret ballot election. The bill would also impose mandatory arbitration for first-time collective bargaining agreements should labor and management reach an impasse.

The open-ended election process outlined in the bill has drawn criticism among moderate Democrats and Republicans, and the legislation currently does not have the necessary 60 votes to defeat a filibuster. Harkin and moderate Democrats are working on a compromise that would allow the bill to move through the Senate by summer's end. ●

Partners in Emergency Planning

States and federal government provide resources for private industry

BY AIMEE CIRUCCI

The following article is provided as a service of The NATSO Foundation, the research, education and public outreach subsidiary of NATSO Inc.

When it comes to weathering an emergency it's often what a business does before a crisis that determines a positive or negative outcome. As Donna Childs, founder and CEO of Childs Capital, a company affected by the Sept. 11 attacks explains, "We had trained in advance and knew what to do."

The Sept. 11 attacks, recent hurricanes and the H1N1 Flu outbreak have all reaffirmed the importance of emergency planning for both businesses and individuals. So it's no surprise that an abundance of resources have emerged offering all the information necessary to begin creating an emergency plan.

Federal Government Resources

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) aims to reduce the loss of life and property and protect the country from hazards, including natural disasters, acts of terrorism and other man-made disasters. FEMA's Web site, www.fema.gov, is an informative place to start gathering information on emergency planning. The site includes a large section on emergency planning with resources for determining disaster risk, preparing for a disaster and assembling emergency supplies.

FEMA also offers a free step-by-step guide to disaster preparedness called "Are You Ready?" and a free DVD, "Getting Ready for Disaster" which guides viewers through the important steps of disaster preparedness. Both tools are available at www.fema.gov/areyouready.

Additional Emergency Planning Resources

American Red Cross: Prepare Your Workplace and Employees www.redcross.org (Click on "Preparing and Getting Trained.")

FEMA: Emergency Management Guide for Business and Industry www.fema.gov/business/guide/index.shtml

National Hurricane Center: Hurricane Preparedness www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2 (Click on "Be Prepared.")

OSHA: How to Plan for Workplace Emergencies and Evacuations www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3088.pdf

Pandemic Influenza, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery www.pandemicflu.gov (Click on "Plan and Prepare," then "Workplace.")

Small Business Administration: Disaster Preparedness www.sba.gov (Click on "Services," then "Disaster Assistance," then "Disaster Preparedness.")

With so many government agencies, FEMA isn't the only place to go for help. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Web site, www.fmcsa.dot.gov, also includes disaster relief resources, including detailed information on regulations involving motor carriers and drivers in the event of a disaster declaration.

State/Multi-State Resources

Partnerships are vital for sharing information and resources in disaster planning. Often state and local governments partner in creating disaster plans and responding to emergencies. Most states also have robust departments of emergency response that provide information, training, and state specific resources. One example of state specific information is Virginia's expansive emergency Web site, www.vaemergency.com. The best place to start researching local resources is the official Web sites for state or local governments.

Another way to find state resources is through the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN), which bills itself as "a collaborative multi-state effort by Extension Services across the country to improve the delivery of services to citizens affected by disasters." EDEN offers many courses free of charge including "Ready Business" (<http://eden.lsu.edu/LearningOps>) which instructs business owners on preparing a disaster business plan. EDEN's online membership list, available at www.eden.lsu.edu under "About Eden," provides links to state specific disaster related agencies and resources.

Business Specific Resources

Ready.gov is FEMA's user-friendly Web site to help Americans "plan, prepare and stay informed." The site has an enormous amount of disaster-related information including an entire section

devoted to emergency planning for businesses that includes case studies and testimonials, information on FEMA's business preparedness mentoring initiative, guidelines for the costs associated with disaster planning and many other useful publications.

In the end, the only thing more frightening than a disaster is not having a plan in place to respond to it. Thanks to the many local and national resources mentioned above, travel plaza operators can easily begin disaster planning today and sleep more soundly tonight knowing that they are prepared. ●



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